

**APPLICATION
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APPLICANT NAME: Jonathan D. Chapple-Sokol
Randy W. Mann
William J. Murphy
Jed H. Rankin
Daniel S. Vanslette

TITLE: METHOD OF FORMING
REFRACTORY METAL
CONTACT IN AN OPENING, AND
RESULTING STRUCTURE

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METHOD OF FORMING REFRACTORY METAL CONTACT IN AN OPENING, AND RESULTING STRUCTURE

Jonathan D. Chapple-Sokol, Randy William Mann, William Joseph Murphy,
Jed H. Rankin, Daniel S. Vanslette,

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a method of forming a refractory metal contact over a silicon substrate in a solid state structure, and to related structures. More particularly, the invention relates to a method employing a sacrificial silicon layer that serves as a nucleation layer for subsequent deposition of a refractory material to form a contact.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Conductive metal contacts are frequently found in semiconductor devices, and typically are formed by deposition of a refractory material, such as tungsten or the like, confined by a silicon oxide layer previously deposited over a conducting substrate containing, for example, a silicide. Steps in the conventional method of forming such contacts, and the nature of a problem that sometimes arises, are best understood with reference to Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4(A)-(B) hereof.

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of a relevant portion of the underlying structure, wherein an underlying silicide layer 100 serves as a substrate 4 with an oxide layer 102 formed thereon. The location, shape and size of the desired conductor is determined by a through opening 104 formed in the oxide layer 102, with exposed surface 106 of the silicide serving as a bottom 106 of the opening 104. As best seen in Figure 2, a thin metallic layer 200 is then deposited at the bottom of aperture 104 to serve as a contact liner. Then, per Figure 3, a thin nucleation layer 300 of a refractory material such as

1 tungsten is formed in the presence of silane gas to cover oxide layer 102, the sides 108 of
2 aperture 104, per liner 200. This is followed, per Figure 4(A), by the deposition of a layer
3 400 containing the desired refractory material in an amount sufficient to totally cover and
4 fill up the inside of aperture 104 and to extend over the upper surface of oxide layer 102.
5 Note that the nucleation layer 300 becomes, in effect, absorbed within the refractory layer
6 400.

7 Unfortunately, when a refractory material such as tungsten is deposited from
8 decomposition of WF_6 through the use of either physical vapor deposition (PVD) or
9 chemical vapor deposition (CVD), particularly during a chemical vapor deposition step,
10 some of the fluorine released from decomposition of WF_6 combines with silicon in the
11 silicide layer 100 and a propensity to form an undesirable region 402, as is probably best
12 seen in the enlarged view in Figure 4(B).

13 An example of a prior patent which appears to address a similar problem is US
14 Patent 5,804, 499, to Dehm et al., titled "Prevention of Abnormal WSi_x Oxidation by In-
15 Situ Amorphous Silicon Deposition", which suggests a process in which amorphous
16 silicon is deposited in a thin layer on top of tungsten silicide to prevent abnormal WSi_x
17 oxidation during subsequent process steps. The layer of amorphous silicon as mentioned
18 in this patent is bounded by a spacer also made of amorphous silicon. The reference does
19 not teach the provision of a continuous layer of silicon to address the problem at issue.

20 The present invention seeks to address this particular problem in a simple and
21 efficient manner.

22 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

23 This invention provides a method by which a refractory material may be
24 deposited in and over an opening in a non-conducting layer over a conducting layer,
25 employing a known PVD or CVD step, without damage to the underlying conducting
26 layer.

27 The present invention also provides a structure which includes a refractory
28 material contact formed over an opening in a non-conductive layer deposited over a
29 conductive metal silicide layer.
30

Accordingly, in a first aspect of this invention, there is provided a method of filling an opening in an oxide layer, over a liner layer formed on a silicide layer underlying both the oxide layer and the liner layer, which includes the step of forming a continuous first layer of silicon on the oxide layer, a wall of the opening and the liner layer and, thereafter, forming a second layer of a refractory material on the first layer so as to cover the same and to also substantially fill the opening.

In another aspect of this invention, there is provided a multi-layer structure which includes a silicide layer having a first surface; an oxide layer formed on the first surface and having a second surface with a through opening defined in the oxide layer from the second surface to the first surface; a liner layer formed on the first surface at a bottom of the opening, a continuous silicon layer formed to extend over the second surface, the opening surface and the liner layer; and a refractory material layer formed on the silicon layer so as to substantially fill the opening.

These and other aspects, objectives and advantages of the present invention will become clearer from an understanding of the following detailed description with reference to the appended figures.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figures 1, 2, 3 and 4(A)-(B) all relate to the prior art.

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view showing a metal silicide layer over which is formed a non-conducting oxide layer with a through aperture defined therein.

Figure 2 is a cross-sectional view showing the structure per Figure 1, with a metallic liner layer formed at a bottom surface of the aperture.

Figure 3 is a cross-sectional view at a stage following Figure 2, showing the deposition of a nucleation layer 300 of tungsten over the oxide layer, the sides of the opening formed therein, and the liner at the bottom of the opening.

Figure 4(A) is a cross-sectional view at a later stage in the known process, wherein a deposit of a refractory material covers the oxide layer and fills the opening above the liner, and also indicates the presence of an undesirable region that may

sometimes be formed during deposition of the refractory material due to interaction with the underlying silicide.

Figure 4(B) is an enlarged view of a relevant portion of Figure 4(A), to show more clearly the undesired contamination of the underlying silicide layer at the bottom of the opening that is otherwise filled with refractory material.

Figure 5, per the method according to the present invention, is a cross-sectional view of the structure per Figure 2 with the deposit of a continuous silicon layer over the oxide layer, the sides of the opening formed therein, and the underlying liner at the bottom of the opening.

Figure 6 is a cross-sectional view after deposition of a refractory material over the continuous silicon layer shown in Figure 5.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As indicated above, the present invention is aimed at providing a method that ensures against contamination of an underlying silicide substrate by any constituent of a refractory conducting layer during its deposition into the desired structure.

Referring to the structure illustrated in cross-sectional view in Figure 2, note that a silicide layer 100, of the order of 300-800 Å in thickness and deposited on a silicon substrate 150, typically serves as a substrate for an oxide layer 102 deposited thereon with a through opening 104 defined therein, with a liner layer 200 deposited at the bottom 106 of opening 104 in known manner. Liner layer 200 may comprise at least one of titanium, titanium nitride, tungsten, and an alloy of titanium and tungsten, and may incidentally be deposited on the oxide layer 102. The preferred method according to this invention includes these steps of the prior art.

In the prior art, as best understood with reference to Figure 3, a layer 300 of tungsten (W) deposited from WF_6 decomposition in the presence of silane was then formed as a nucleation layer.

According to the present invention, a continuous layer 500 of amorphous or polycrystalline silicon is deposited to a controlled thickness preferably by either physical

vapor depositions (PVD) or by chemical vapor deposition (CVD), to extend over the oxide layer 102 and the upper surface of liner layer 200. This is best understood with reference to Figure 5.

5 The continuous silicon layer 500 is intended to be a sacrificial layer, i.e., it is anticipated that it may chemically interact and combine with any fluorine (F) that becomes available when, for example, WF_6 is decomposed to generate a tungsten contact layer 400. In other words, it is intended in the present invention that some of this silicon be consumed in preference to any silicon from the underlying silicide layer 100. The deposited silicon layer 500 must be in the form of a continuous amorphous or
10 polycrystalline silicon layer. The deposited polysilicon may be obtained by decomposition of a silane such as silane, disilane or trisilane. However, silanes containing ions such as dichlorosilane may advantageously be used and are preferred for this purpose.

15 The resulting structure is best understood with reference to Figure 6, in which the silicide substrate 100 supports oxide layer 102 and liner 200, and the continuous sacrificial amorphous or polycrystalline silicon layer 500 formed thereon serves as a base for the refractory layer 600 which extends over oxide layer 102 and substantially fills the opening 104. Note that a small imperfectly filled region 502 may exist in the refractory material 600 within the volume of the substantially filled opening 104 without any
20 deleterious effects on the resulting contact structure and its functionality.

The structure as illustrated in Figure 6 can then be subjected to conventional subsequent processing such as planarization of 600, 500 and 200.

As previously indicated, the present invention is intended to provide a satisfactory refractory layer while avoiding the known problems associated with the related prior art.
25 It is intended, further, that the "refractory material" may be a refractory metal, e.g., tungsten, titanium, tantalum or molybdenum employed directly as a "metal"; a refractory metal employed as a constituent of a "compound" thereof, e.g., titanium nitride, tantalum nitride, etc.; or even as a constituent of an "alloy" with another metal, e.g., titanium-tungsten. With any of these available options, the provision of a continuous silicon layer
30 as discussed above ensures against the known problem.

It is intended that the desired refractory material layer 600 be formed in known manner by either a PVD or CVD process step.

It is preferred that the continuous sacrificial silicon layer 500 be provided as an amorphous or polysilicon film of a thickness not greater than about 50 Å.

The application of the continuous sacrificial silicon layer 500 by either the PVD or the CVD process is preferably accomplished at a temperature in the range 500°-650°C, with 600°C being particularly preferred. It should be noted that when a PVD process is employed there may be little or no deposition of the silicon on sides 108, 108 of opening 104.

It should also be noted that the traditional way of providing a silicon deposition is to flow the silane gas in one process chamber over the underlying structure and, subsequent to depositing the desired silicon layer, to move the wafer supporting the desired structure into another process chamber where a WF_6 environment, for example, could be provided for the subsequent step of depositing tungsten thereon. An obvious problem in doing this is that the timing and conditions required to form the proper layer of silicon to protect the wafer from the chemically active WF_6 gas has a narrow process window and is subject to control problems.

The present invention, by utilizing the silicon layer as it does, i.e., as both a sacrificial layer and a nucleation layer, advantageously eliminates the need to do this. In other words, the wafer may be maintained in a single chamber and first be exposed to the silane or dichlorosilane to obtain the desired silicon layer under controlled conditions of time, temperature and flow rate, and this may be followed by passage of WF_6 gas over the same wafer in the same chamber under appropriate process conditions of controlled temperature, pressure and flow rate. The process is readily adaptable to either physical vapor deposition or chemical vapor deposition conducted in known manner. Any adaptation to employ any refractory metal, compound or alloy, may be made in known manner. It is considered that under all circumstances such as these, the sacrificial use of the continuous polysilicon film as taught in this invention ensures against deterioration of the underlying silicide layer.

